

Disrupting Harm

Evidence from 13 countries on the context, threats, and children's perspectives of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Detailed Analysis of the Frontline Providers Survey

Philippines

Last Updated: 27/04/21

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This report is a summary of preliminary data collected for this research project. The perspectives contained herein represent the individuals interviewed and surveyed. Support from the Fund to End Violence Against Children does not constitute endorsement.

Introduction

The Disrupting Harm frontline workers survey aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA that are presenting to those directly working to prevent and respond on the welfare frontline. Insights from frontline workers via this survey allowed us to more deeply explore findings from other research activities such as the national literature reviews and government interviews from the perspective of staff directly engaged in the response to this growing problem.

A convenience sample of 37 interviews were conducted with client-facing frontline child protection workers who were surveyed in each participating country. In order to participate in the survey respondents had to meet the following qualifying requirements:

- 1) Be an adult over 18 years of age;
- 2) Work the last 12 months (at least) in the field of social work, psychology or welfare;
- 3) Manage their own case load directly in the last 12 months;
- 4) Have caseloads that included children over the last 12 months.

The survey itself included a combination of 68 closed and open-ended questions. The data was collected via SurveyGizmo and administered by Disrupting Harm staff (either in person, or remotely via phone/Skype – due to COVID-19). Whilst the data collected is not statistically representative, it is still a vital snapshot in indicating scope and broadening our perspectives on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA.

NOTE:

In the Philippines, the data collection for the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic from August 25th 2020 to December 19th 2020 where movement restrictions were in place. The Philippines was one of the countries worst hit by COVID-19 and this had a very significant impact on completion of this activity. Many social services were incredibly overstretched and grappling with remote working conditions. We struggled to reach the sample. Before Christmas 2020, the research team made the decision to discontinue data collection with a final sample of 37.

Basic Description of Survey Sample

As noted above, the dramatic COVID-19 situation in Philippines led to discontinuing data collection in late 2020 with a final sample of 37 participants. The frontline workers (n=37) consisted of 35 (94.6%) females and 2 males (5.4%). The disproportion between male and female workers is a reflection of the few males working in frontline roles in social support in the Philippines, which is partly influenced by gender norms around work and the general understanding of what social work is and does throughout the country.¹

Participants were asked to select a single category that best describes their organisation. In reality, these categories are sometimes not mutually exclusive, however the indications of a category that ‘best’ describes their organisation does help to depict the range of organisations that participants represent (Figure 1).

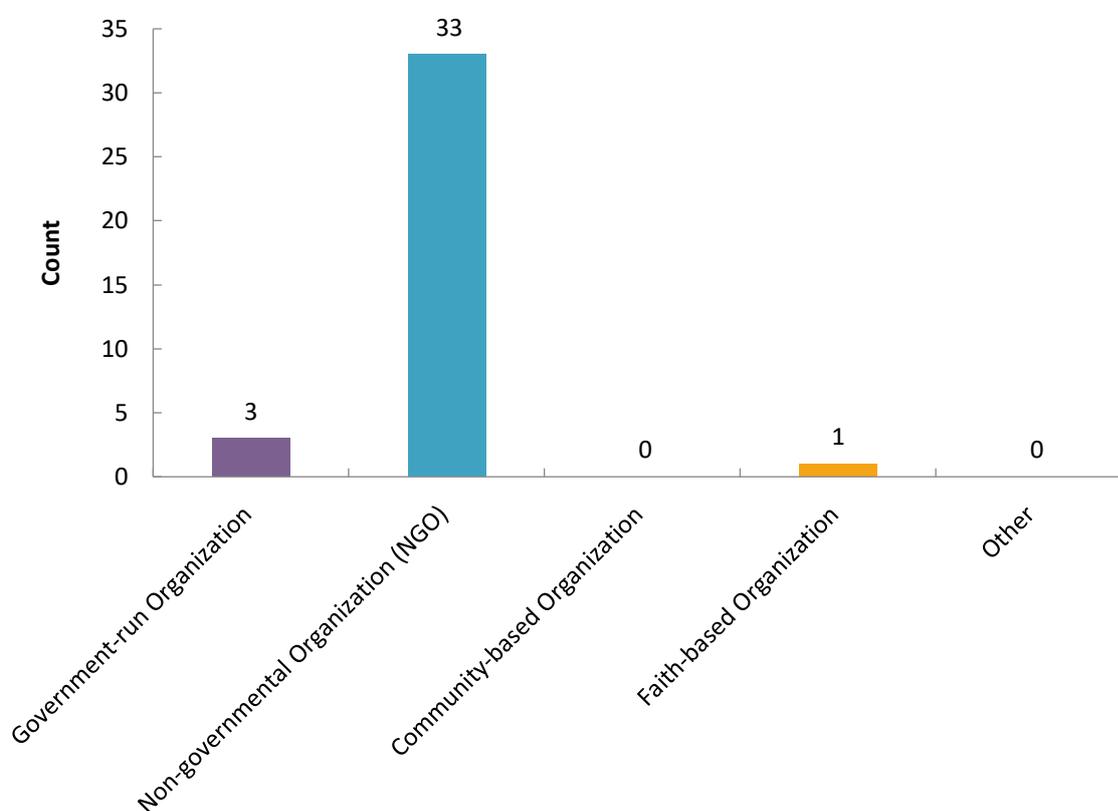


Figure 1. Types of participants’ organisations. N=37

The majority of participants identified their organisation as non-governmental (n=33). Three respondents represented government-run organisations and one - a faith-based organisation. Even though only one respondent identified ‘faith-based organisation’ to ‘best’ describe their organisation,

¹ Personal communication from Philippines local field research team.

it should be noted that many non-government organisations in the Philippines are connected to faith communities and the delineation between faith and secular worlds is not always clear.²

The frontline social support workers were asked to detail what type of services they provided related to children. The results are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

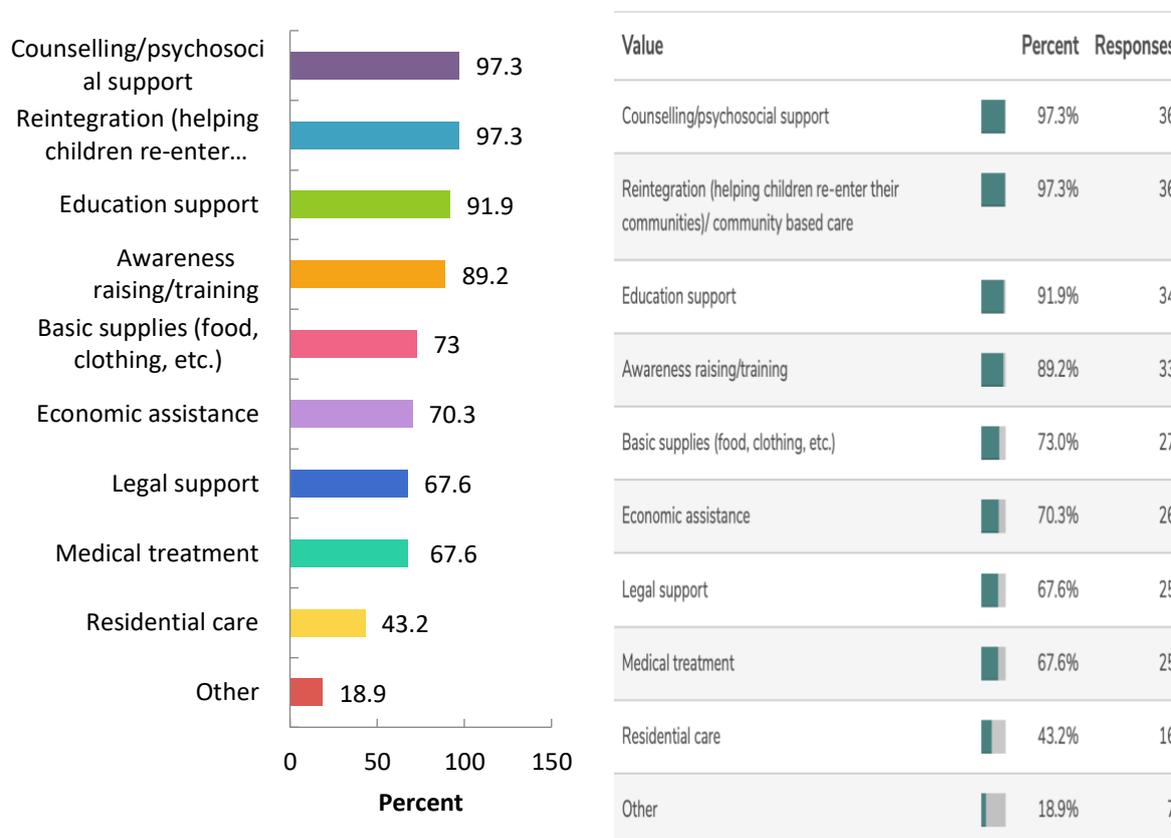


Figure 2. Types of services provided by participants' organisations. N=37

All respondents (100%) worked in organisations providing more than one service to children (n=37). As Figure 2 indicates, the most frequently reported services were counselling/psychosocial support (n=36-97%), reintegration (n=36 – 97%), education support (n=34 – 92%) and awareness raising/training (n=33 – 89%). 27 frontline workers indicated their organisation provided basic supplies (food, clothing etc.), 26 economic assistance (70%), 25 legal support and medical treatment (68%). The least common service was residential care – 16 workers (43%) reported providing this kind of service.

Other services mentioned by the frontline social support workers included:

- Research activities
- Capacity building activities for social workers
- Running a Family Development Programme
- Leadership development

² Personal communication from Philippines local field research team.

- Assisting in finding employment opportunities
- Referral to other organisations and agencies, e.g., to legal actors, the police, National Bureau of Investigation, medical assistance, government assistance
- Assisting children in court
- Providing psychiatric treatment
- Spiritual care, sharing bible stories
- Linking/referring families with available community resources/services

Perpetrator Demographics

To expand on the current understanding of the context in which OCSEA happens in the Philippines, the survey sought to explore the typical relationships that were observed by social support workers between offenders and child survivors when they reported having worked with OCSEA cases.

From the 34 respondents who had worked with OCSEA cases, men were (only slightly) more commonly identified as perpetrators and women (much more often) as facilitators of OCSEA. Out of those who have managed OCSEA cases in the past 12 months, the most commonly referenced relationship between the victim and perpetrator was said to be that the perpetrator was a foreigner (almost half of the responses), followed by parent/step parent. A few respondents selected 'community member over 18', 'other relative over 18' and 'family friend'. None of the frontline workers selected the 'sibling over/under 18', 'community member under 18' or 'other relative under 18' options to describe the most common perpetrator-victim relationship.

Similarly, participants were asked about the most common relationships between facilitators and victims in the OCSEA cases they have managed. Here, out of the cases that included a facilitator, the most referenced relationship was that the facilitator was a parent/step parent (almost half of the responses), followed by community member over 18 or a family friend. Other selected options included other relative under/over 18. One respondent selected 'foreigner' to describe the facilitator.

One NGO-worker commented on the relationship between offenders and child victims: *"If I may add, in most of the OCSEA cases (with non-perpetrating family) that I know, the survivors' will say that they came from a loving family. On the other hand, for the survivors who have been perpetrating family, they will say that their family did it because they pity them. The thing about OCSEA that I observed is that the bond between the victim and the perpetrator [facilitator] is stronger and more important than the exploitation that happened"* (RA3-PH-29-A).

Despite being provided with a definition of OCSEA in the survey, there may have still been some confusion around what it means to "perpetrate" OCSEA. Seeing as most social workers only deal with victims and facilitators in their work (as many of the buyers/perpetrators are online or in other countries), in their qualitative responses some respondents tended to describe 'facilitators' as having perpetrated OCSEA. This may be due to the fact that, for many of them, the buyers/perpetrators are invisible. The facilitators then become the only culpable party that is visible and discussed (often in legal terms) of perpetrating a crime.³

This confusion among respondents is potentially a helpful finding. While in the research/development sector buyers are perceived as the perpetrators, people in communities (and often the children themselves) may not have a clear understanding of the end-users of child sexual abuse materials. Rather, they are more keenly aware of crimes committed at the local level, which often excludes the actual buyer/end-user/perpetrator.

³ Personal communication from Philippines local field research team.

This also potentially underscores a limited scope of interaction with (and understanding of) OCSEA. There seems to be a tendency to focus on OCSEA as only about live-streaming sexual exploitation. This may overlook the potentially very common forms of OCSEA involving locals, which includes grooming and sexual encounters through dating/hook-up apps. Many of these are perpetrated within local communities by Philippine nationals.⁴

One NGO-worker also commented on the demographics of OCSEA victims she has worked with: *“Most of the clients are female but there is an increasing number of boys. Most are children - only a few of my clients were adults. Like less than 10”* (RA3-PH-33-A).

⁴ Personal communication from Philippines local field research team.

Scenarios

Participants were presented with four scenarios depicting situations in which at least one offender victimised a child through different modes of online sexual abuse and exploitation. After being provided with definitions of 'OCSEA', a 'perpetrator' and a 'facilitator' earlier in the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the child was a victim and that the offender had committed an OCSEA-related offence.⁵ These questions were designed to elicit insights about how participants assessed different forms and situations of OCSEA. It should be noted that responses are likely based on a combination of the participant's knowledge on the issue, including how these issues may (or may not) be defined in law in a country, as well as influenced by social norms and beliefs. Irrespective of the basis for responses, the results indicate areas that are well understood (sometimes almost unanimously) and others where training and consistent messaging is needed to ensure consistent responses.

A four-point Likert scale was used to assess agreement with statements for the scenario questions. Where interesting indications in differences occurred, we note them, but otherwise combined 'slightly agree' and 'strongly agree' together and 'slightly disagree and strongly disagree' together, resulting in binary agree/disagree categories for the analysis presented here.

⁵ Names for the scenarios were changed to common names in each country for the translations but have been edited in the analysis to be consistent across all the Disrupting Harm reports.

Scenario 1

Palila pays a 16-year-old younger relative, Tamah, to undress while filming and later posts it online. Mamo, who does not know Palila, watches this interaction online from home 30 miles away.

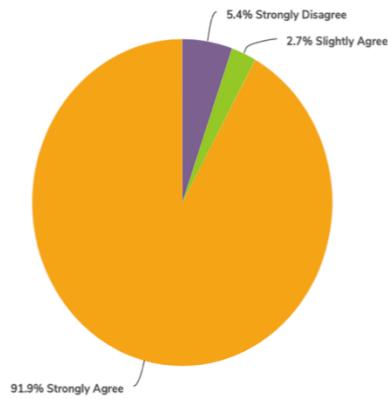


Figure 3. Do you think Tamah is a victim of OCSEA?

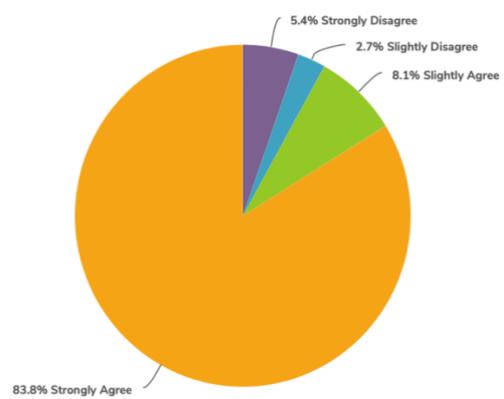


Figure 4. Do you think Mamo has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

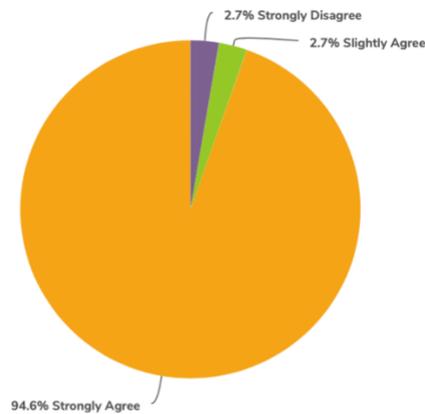
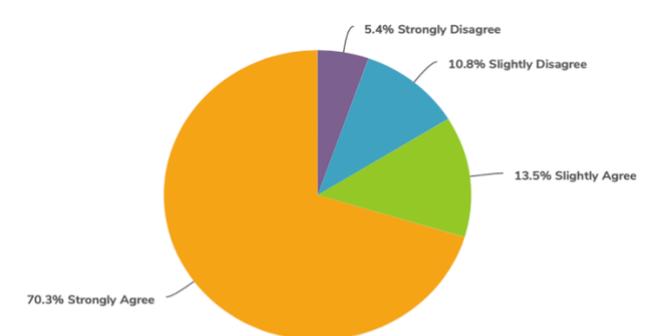


Figure 5. Do you think Palila has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

Nearly all participants agreed that Tamah was a victim of sexual exploitation (n=35 - 95%, Figure 3) and that the adult who paid and filmed her (Palila) had committed an OCSEA-related crime (n=36 – 98%, Figure 5). 92% (n=34) also agreed that the third-party viewing the material had committed an OCSEA related crime. One respondent who only slightly agreed that Mamo committed an OCSEA-crime commented: *“It was not stated if Palila and Mamo were adults or minors. Hence, if Palila and Mamo were both minors, the same with Tamah, they would all be considered victims of OCSEA”* (RA3-PH-12-A) while another respondent similarly added: *“It depends if Mamo is an adult”* (RA3-PH-26-A). There was no indication in qualitative responses as to why respondents disagreed with any of the statements.

Scenario 2

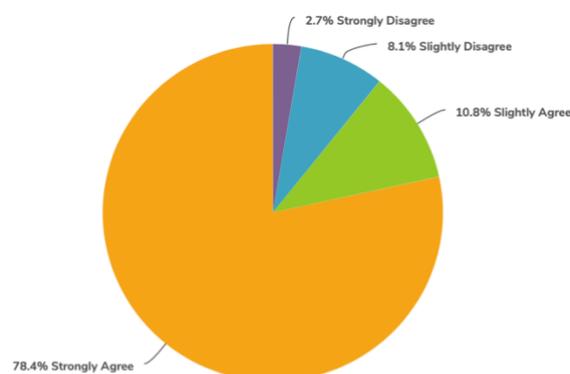
Kaimi is a 17-year-old student. Kaimi has struggled to make good grades this year and is worried that Uli, a teacher who is a close family friend, will tell Kaimi's dad. Kaimi offers to send Uli naked pictures if he promises not to talk to the family. Uli accepts.



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	5.4%	2
Slightly Disagree	10.8%	4
Slightly Agree	13.5%	5
Strongly Agree	70.3%	26

Totals: 37

Figure 6. Do you think Kaimi is a victim of OCSEA?



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	2.7%	1
Slightly Disagree	8.1%	3
Slightly Agree	10.8%	4
Strongly Agree	78.4%	29

Totals: 37

Figure 7. Do you think Uli has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

31 participants (84%) agreed that the student Kaimi is a victim of OCSEA (26 strongly and 5 slightly), and 6 participants (16%) disagreed (4 slightly and 2 strongly) – Figure 6. As Figure 7 indicates, 89% of respondents agreed that the teacher (Uli) in a position of power has committed an OCSEA-related crime, with 29 strongly agreeing (78%), 4 slightly agreeing (11%), 3 slightly disagreeing (8%) and 1 strongly disagreeing (3%).

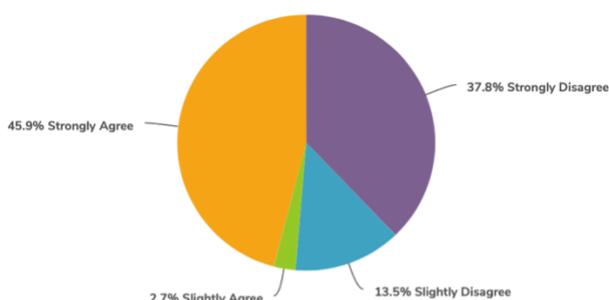
One respondent who strongly disagreed that Kaimi is a victim commented: *“Kaimi offered voluntarily his naked pictures to the teacher and no OSCEA facilitator was involved but Uli the teacher committed crime because he accepted the offer of the naked pictures from the minor and he is a teacher”* (RA3-PH-19-A). At the same time, another participant who agreed that Kaimi is a victim in the scenario, added *“despite the decision of Kaimi to voluntarily send Uli a naked picture, she is still a victim of OCSEA considering that in the Philippines 17 is still considered as a child. On the other hand, Uli should not tolerate Kaimi's action and should focus on how he can help the child”* (RA3-PH-22-A). One respondent also commented: *“In the OCSEA case, there is no so-called “willing victim””* (RA3-PH-39-A).

One respondent from a government-run organisation who disagreed with both statements commented: *“The pictures could be sent in a different form and not online. That's why I slightly disagree on the two questions”* (RA3-PH-06-A). This suggests that the respondent feels that where the

technology interacts with the abuse affects the definition of online/offline abuse (which differs from the definition for Disrupting Harm which asserts that this can be at any point). More work is perhaps still needed to help workers come to a common understanding – though ultimately the point is to prevent and respond to harm, regardless of whether it occurs fully offline or with technology/online components.

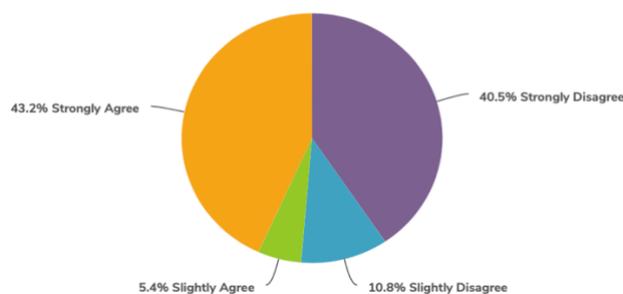
Scenario 3

Sam is a 10-year-old whose family struggles to make ends meet in their rural village. Sam’s uncle, Alex, has a good government job and has always given money to help the family out. Recently, Uncle Alex wrote a message to Sam on Facebook asking to have a secret meeting at his house. When Sam arrives, Uncle Alex asked Sam to sit on his lap and began touching his private parts.



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	37.8%	14
Slightly Disagree	13.5%	5
Slightly Agree	2.7%	1
Strongly Agree	45.9%	17
Totals: 37		

Figure 8. Do you think Sam is a victim of OCSEA?



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	40.5%	15
Slightly Disagree	10.8%	4
Slightly Agree	5.4%	2
Strongly Agree	43.2%	16
Totals: 37		

Figure 9. Do you think Alex has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

As figure 8 shows, only half of the participants (n=18 – 49%) agreed that the 10-year-old Sam is a victim of OCSEA. As much as 51% (n=19) disagreed with the statement, with 38% participants strongly disagreeing (n=14). Similarly, only 48% agreed (n=18) that the adult Alex has committed an OCSEA-related crime and 51% (n=19) disagreed (4 slightly and 15 strongly).

From the additional comments it appears that the perception of the crime seemed to relate to an understanding of the scenario based on the abuse occurring offline, without considering the online grooming that took place (via messaging service). As mentioned previously, it is understood that in the Philippines, OCSEA is understood to include live-streaming or the creation of child sexual abuse material, but that grooming is less well understood. This is especially pressing, given the known usage of dating/hook-up apps and social networking platforms to groom children for sexual exploitation and abuse.⁶ This is despite the fact that the Philippines is one of the few Disrupting Harm countries where grooming is defined by law. In some of the additional comments respondents mentioned:

⁶ Personal communication from Philippines local field research team.

*“This is a case of sexual **molestation/abuse** by the uncle without the exchange of nude pictures online; he met Sam offline and did the abuse in person. Though he sends the message of meeting each other on Facebook but there was no mention of any sexual interest” (RA3-PH-15-A);*

*“**If a hidden camera** has been put up during the incident, then it would be OCSEA” (RA3-PH-12-A);*

“It is more of child sexual abuse crime” (RA3-PH-45-A);

“More of a child abuse offence” (RA3-PH-34-A);

*“The case I think is only a child sexual abuse and **not the online form**” (RA3-PH-06-A);*

“Anybody can be a perpetrator even if he/she has a good source of income” (RA3-PH-27-A);

However, one NGO-worker who strongly agreed with both statements did comment on the grooming process: *“Though the abuse happened physically, **we need to consider the efforts made by Alex through online** lure or grooming Sam to agree on the private meeting” (RA3-PH-22-A).*

Scenario 4

Joe is 16, and his girlfriend Lucy is 15. They have been dating for a year and regularly have sex. Sometimes, when they can't be together, they send photos to each other of themselves naked. Joe's friend Matt knows about this and breaks into Joe's phone and forwards naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends.

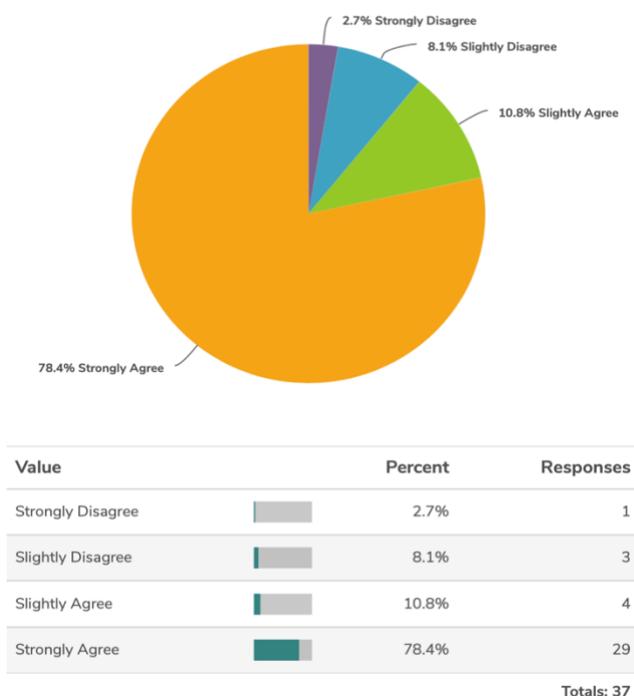


Figure 10. Do you think Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

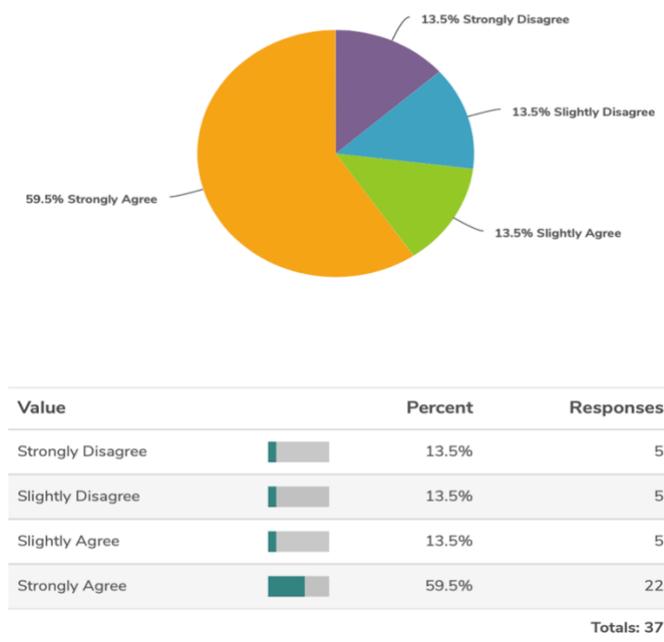


Figure 11. Do you think Joe is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

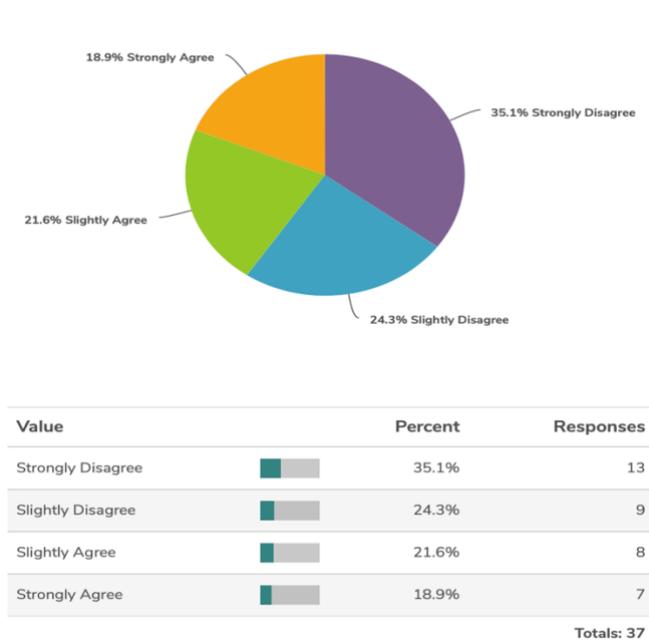


Figure 12. Do you think that Joe has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

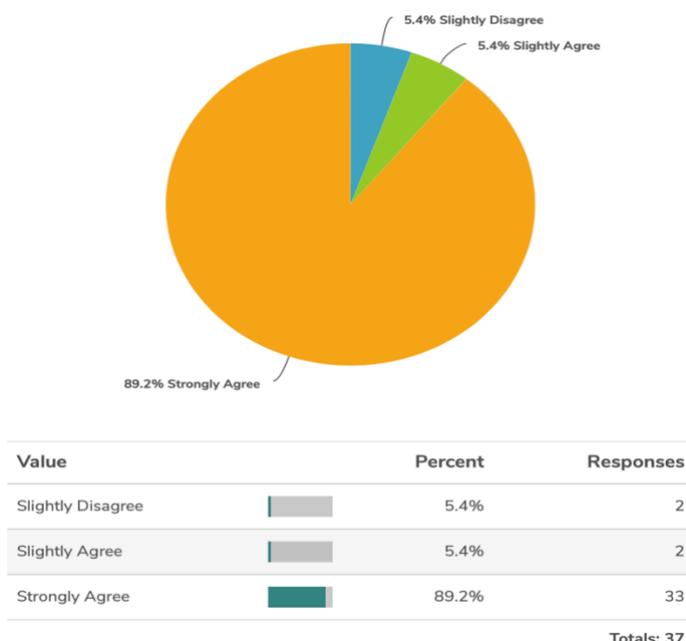


Figure 13. Do you think that Matt has committed an OCSEA related crime?

As Figure 10 indicates, 89% of respondents (n=33) agreed that Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime and 11% disagreed (n=4). Fewer participants agreed that Joe is a victim of this crime – as Figure 11 shows, 73% of participants (n=27) agreed and 27% (n=10) disagreed (5 slightly and 5 strongly). At the same time, while 59% disagreed (n=22) that Joe has committed an OCSEA-related crime (9 slightly and 13 strongly), 41% agreed (n=15, 7 strongly and 8 slightly). As Figure 13 shows, nearly all (94%) respondents indicated that Matt has committed an OCSEA-related crime (n=35); two participants disagreed.

In additional comments respondents talked about the importance of Matt’s age in determining if he committed a criminal offence:

“I chose the slightly option to Matt since he is possibly a minor” (RA3-PH-06-A);

“Joe is exempted from criminal liability because he is a minor. In the Philippines’ law, he did not commit OCSEA related crime. Matt’s age was not stated so if he is a minor, then he will be exempted from criminal liability. I answered strongly agree under the presumption that Matt is already an adult” (RA3-PH-20-A).

While the scenario does not describe any offence committed by Joe, it is interesting to note that the age of criminal responsibility in the Philippines is 15 (Joe is 16), which suggests a lack of understanding of legal provisions.

Summary

Participants overwhelmingly correctly identified the children as victims and adults as offenders across the four scenarios. However, in three questions there were some larger discrepancies in responses.

The first two questions related to Scenario 3, where an uncle of a 10-year-old boy messaged him via Facebook and suggested a private meeting, during which he started touching the boy's private parts. Almost half of the frontline workers did not perceive the act as criminal (the highest percentage out of all Disrupting Harm countries). This seems to be, at least in part, due to the perception that OCSEA is limited to exploitation which solely takes place online, such as live-streaming and the production and sharing of child sexual abuse materials. This perception tends to exclude cases of OCSEA which involve online grooming (via messaging service) for sexual abuse in a real-life environment. This is despite the fact that the Philippines is one of the few Disrupting Harm countries where grooming is defined by law.

In Scenario 4, where two minors, Lucy and Joe, are in a consensual, sexual relationship, but Joe's friend, Matt, breaks into Joe's phone and shares naked photos of Lucy, we also see large discrepancies amongst respondents. While 89% perceived Lucy as a victim of the crime, only 73% perceived Joe as a victim. At the same time, while 59% of the frontline workers did not perceive Joe's actions as a criminal act, 41% did (Figure 12). While technically two children consensually photographing themselves naked is the crime of 'creating child sexual abuse material', there is ongoing debate about this characterisation. For example, if the images had remained between the two consenting parties, harm may not have been experienced. In a 2020 study on self-generated sexual content, it was found that children thought sharing such images could even provide advantages in their relationships and/or increase their self-esteem.⁷ On the other hand, when the materials are shared outside the couple, they may end-up circulating the web and being acquired by offenders.⁸ Additionally, the normalisation of children sharing sexual images, videos and sexualised online conversations may lead to victims underreporting because they may fail to perceive what is happening to them as abusive or exploitative.⁹

Given that participants were provided with definitions of OCSEA before reading the scenarios, some of those results raise a number of questions and point to a need of providing awareness raising and case handling/training activities that consider issues through a more inclusive lens for frontline workers in the Philippines. The definitions might have not been clearly understood, or other factors (such as cultural, social or legal) may have influenced participants perception of the situations described.

⁷ ECPAT Sweden. (2020, May). ["I början vart det lite läskigt men nu är det vardag" En rapport om yngre barn och egenproducerat material.](#) [Translated from Swedish].

⁸ Bracket Foundation. (2019). Artificial Intelligence: [Combating online sexual abuse of children.](#) 10.

⁹ Palmer, T. (2015). [Digital Dangers: the impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.](#) Barnado's. 35.

Vulnerabilities

Participants were provided with a list of child vulnerability factors and asked to indicate, based on their knowledge and experience, which factors increased children’s vulnerability to general sexual exploitation (i.e., all kinds) and more specifically, to OCSEA.

- **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse and exploitation**

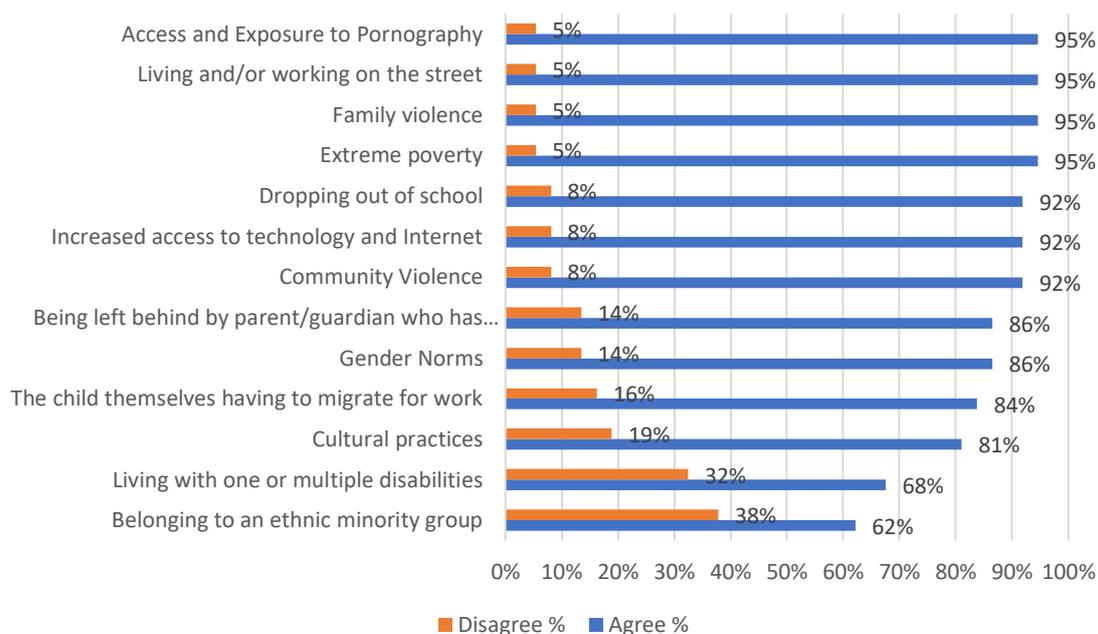


Figure 14. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children’s vulnerability to general child sexual exploitation. N=37

Figure 14 shows overwhelming agreement that almost all the factors listed were considered to impact children’s vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. It shows that access and exposure to pornography, living and/or working on the street, family violence and extreme poverty were rated by 95% of participants as factors increasing children’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation. That was followed by dropping out of school, increased access to technology and internet and community violence all selected by 92% of respondents as increasing vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in the Philippines. Over 80% of participants also agreed that being left behind by parent/guardian who had migrated for work (86%) impacts children’s vulnerability (research has shown that the overseas Filipino workers phenomenon and its consequences – which can leave children separated from their parents (e.g. with grandparents or older relatives) and without proper guidance related to use of Information communication technology puts them at risk of OCSEA.)¹⁰ 86% of respondents perceived gender norms, 84% the child having to migrate for work and 81% - cultural practices as factors influencing children’s vulnerability. The smallest agreement was found around the belonging to an ‘ethnic minority group’ (62% agreed, 38% disagreed) and ‘living with one or more disabilities’ (68% agreed, while 32% disagreed) factors.

¹⁰ De La Salle University-Social Development Research Center. (2019). National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines Final Report [unpublished].

While limited, research looking at children with disabilities suggests that few social workers and other frontline staff are aware of disability as a risk and vulnerability factor in relation to any form of abuse – and while research is still lacking, what does exist tells us that it is very significant.¹¹ This suggests a need for inclusion of this issue in training and development of approaches that are more inclusive of children with disabilities and their families within child protection and other welfare settings.

Some additional vulnerability factors listed by participants were:

- Access to foreign offenders
- Advanced money transactions systems (*Money transfer services are often being used by offenders to send payments in cases of OCSEA in the Philippines*)¹²
- Widespread use of English as the second main language
- Materialism
- Child abuse experiences
- Distorted moral values
- Normalising promiscuity or early teenage sex
- Peer pressure

Terms such as “materialism”, “distorted moral values”, and “normalising promiscuity” assign a certain level of blame to the child victims – an approach which is often recognised by researchers in the Philippines.¹³

¹¹ Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities. (2015). [Literature Review](#).

¹² Terre des Hommes – Netherlands and ECPAT Philippines. (2013). The Scope and Magnitude of Online Sexual Abuse of Children in Highly Affected Areas in the Philippines.

¹³ Personal communication from Philippines local field research team.

• **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to OCSEA**

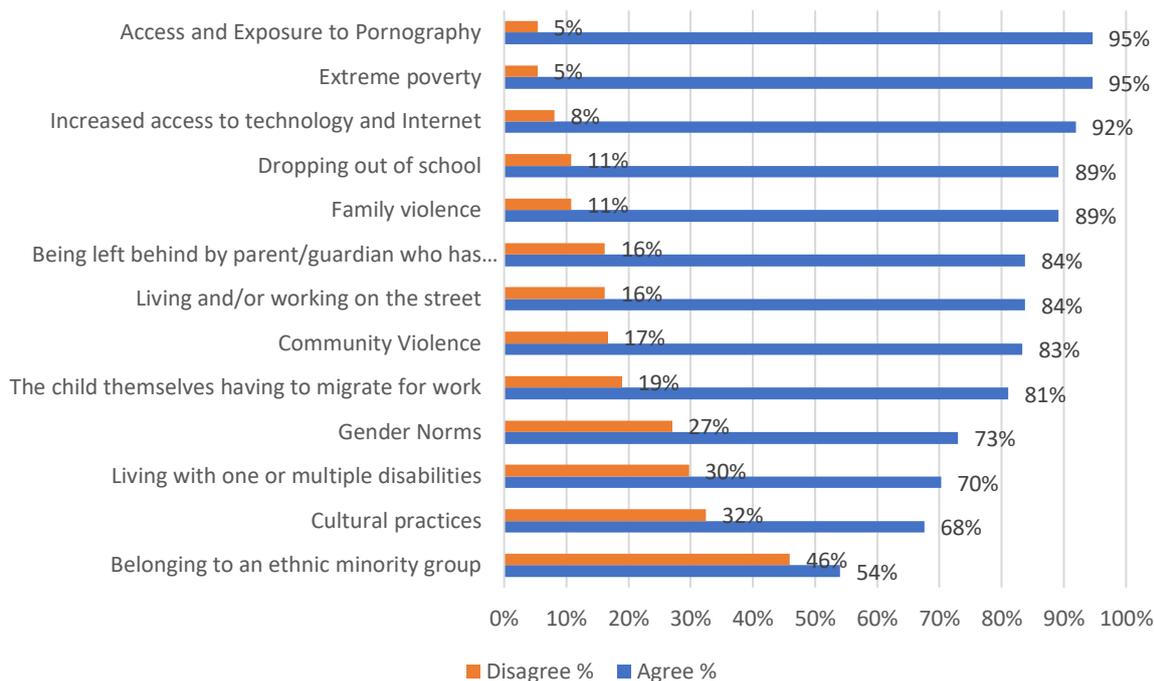


Figure 15. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children's vulnerability to OCSEA.
N=37*

Note: The community violence factor score is based on 36 responses

Strong, but slightly smaller, agreement was found among respondents in regard to the factors believed to impact children's vulnerability to OCSEA. Nearly all agreed that access and exposure to pornography (95%), extreme poverty (95%) and increased access to technology and internet (92%) increase children's vulnerability to OCSEA. High agreement was also found around the factors of: dropping out of school (89%), family violence (89%), being left behind by parent/guardian who has migrated for work (84%), living and/or working on the street (84%), community violence (83%) and the child having to migrate for work (81%). Less consensus was observed around gender norms (73% agreed, 27% disagreed), living with one or multiple disabilities (70% agreed, 30% disagreed) and cultural practices (68% agreed, 32% disagreed; interestingly, compared to 81% agreeing when asked about child sexual exploitation). Biggest discrepancy was found around the 'belonging to an ethnic minority group' factor – while 54% agreed it impacts children's vulnerability to OCSEA, 46% disagreed.

When respondents were given the option to comment on other sources of vulnerability to OCSEA in their country which may not have been included in the survey options, they noted similar factors than when asked about child sexual exploitation in general, but also mentioned a few additional ones:

- Advanced money transactions systems
- Widespread use of English as the second main language
- Child abuse experiences
- Financial disparity between dollars to pesos
- Materialism/Consumerism
- Negative peer pressure

- Lack of education and awareness about OCSEA
- Greener Pasture Syndrome
- Normalising promiscuity and early teenage sex
- Dysfunctional family

When participants were asked about the **similarities and differences in children’s vulnerability to OCSEA and sexual exploitation in general**, they noted the following:

Similarities:

“The vulnerability of children in general is similar because they are both vulnerable children and need the same protection against abusers. Their strengths and weaknesses are consistent based on their age and environment. If not taken care of they will be vulnerable to any abuse including OCSEA” (RA3-PH-40-A);

“It is similar because it violates child rights - freedom from abuse and exploitation. Though it's being facilitated through the internet and some other offenders justify that there is no touch being done that's why they didn't commit a crime” (RA3-PH-39-A). While here, the participant seems to focus more on similarities between harms, not vulnerability, it is important to note that research shows that the “No touch no harm” approach (meaning that if nobody is physically touching the child, nothing bad is happening to the child) is prevalent among Filipino parents. That might be attributed to poor understanding of the internet and not realising the extent of online circulation that their children’s photos or videos can get.¹⁴¹⁵

“OCSEA for me is just the online and easier version of sexual exploitation, perpetrators find an easy way to do their exploitation without being traced and their target victims are mostly children with these same vulnerabilities. It both exploits and ruins a child's life” (RA3-PH-24-A);

“The factors which make the children vulnerable to become victims are the same and the only difference is the platform used” (RA3-PH-45-A);

“Children are vulnerable to any form of abuse; children do not have the voice to say no to any adult. Children can easily be threatened by the abuser” (RA3-PH-18-A);

“The societal factors are the same either for offline and online sexual exploitation. The society has a role to play and be informed about the exploitation against children” (RA3-PH-45-A).

Differences:

“Children's vulnerability to OCSEA is different from sexual exploitation in the aspect of the purpose or the motive. For OCSEA, the purpose/motive is the exchange of money or in exchange of goods or other objects of value and the transaction is done online while sexual exploitation the purpose might be for

¹⁴ DSWD (2017). National Response Plan to Prevent and Address Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children [unpublished].

¹⁵ Terre des Hommes – Netherlands and ECPAT Philippines. (2013). The Scope and Magnitude of Online Sexual Abuse of Children in Highly Affected Areas in the Philippines.

sexual gratification which is done in person” (RA3-PH-20-A). This comment does, however, suggest a lack of understanding of what OCSEA/child sexual exploitation is.

“Children believe in the adults saying that there is no physical harm happening on the online transaction, unlike with the sexual exploitation that has body contact involved” (RA3-PH-09-A);

“The children's vulnerability to OCSEA is different from vulnerability to sexual exploitation because OCSEA is a global crime and requires a global response. It involves lots of moving parts like the internet, facilitators and the perpetrators. And also, in cases like cybersex trafficking, there is that source supply-side (locally in the Philippines) and demand-side (usually developed countries outside the Philippines), which makes it a lot different from the sexual exploitation” (RA3-PH-20-A).

- **Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse (any types)**

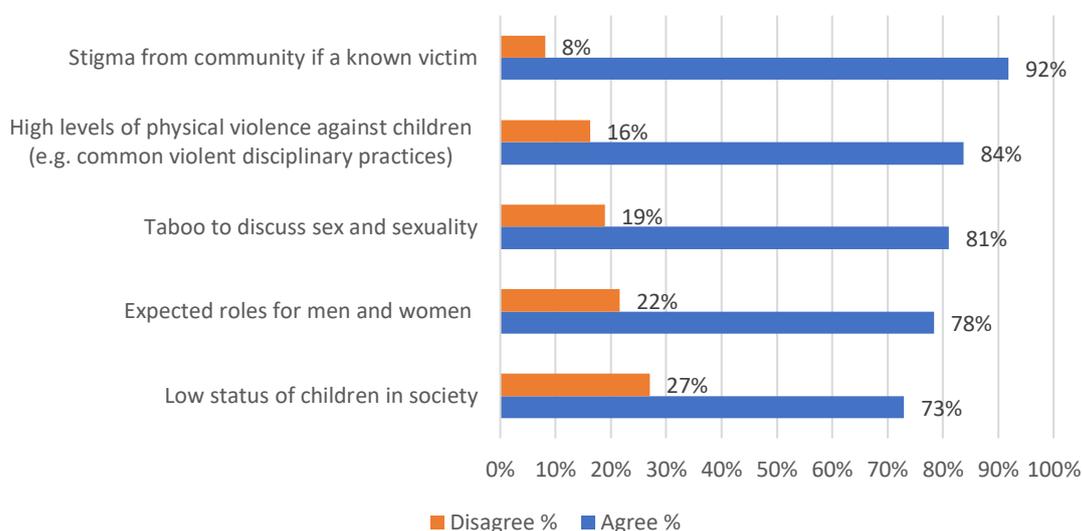


Figure 16. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children’s vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general. N=37

Almost all participants (92%) agreed that stigma from the community increases vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in the Philippines. Other factors were also highly rated – over 80% of frontline workers agreed that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (81%) and high levels of physical violence against children (84%) impact children’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation. 78% thought that expected roles for men and women and 73% that low status of children in society play a role, with one NGO-worker mentioning: *“Culturally children are taught by parents to obey parents without questions and respect elders. Children cannot say no to parents”* (RA3-PH-15-A). This quote reflects the cultural notion of having to respect elders (*‘Pag-galang sa matatanda’*) - *“Children in the Philippines are often conditioned from a very early age to never say no to adults. This can make it particularly difficult for children — especially younger children — to say no to elders within the family or community who request them to take part in sexually exploitive behaviours.”*¹⁶

¹⁶ UNICEF Philippines, Terre des Hommes. (Unpublished). Live-streaming Online Child Sexual Exploitation in the Philippines (Regions III and IV).

Additional factors about society mentioned by participants that they believed increased children’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation included:

- Access to/awareness of the reporting mechanisms
- Being passive to protect family 'image or face'
- High incidence of online sexual activities in the neighbourhood
- Lack of parenting

● **Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability to OCSEA**

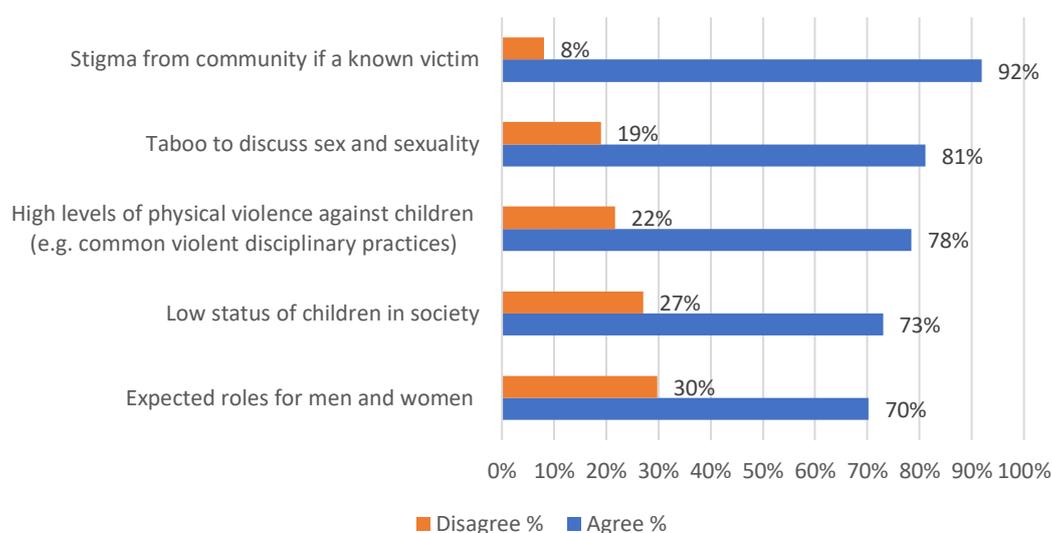


Figure 17. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children’s vulnerability to OCSEA. N=37

Societal factors increasing the vulnerability to OCSEA were perceived similarly to those increasing the vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in general. 92% of respondents agreed stigma from the community has an impact on vulnerability to OCSEA and 81% agreed that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality play a role. The agreement around ‘high levels of physical violence’ was slightly smaller compared to child sexual exploitation in general – 78% agreed compared to 84%. Similarly, fewer participants agreed that expected roles for men and women impact vulnerability to OCSEA compared to child sexual exploitation – 70% agreed compared to 78%. 73% of respondents perceived low status of children in the society as influencing their vulnerability to OCSEA.

When respondents were given the option to comment on other sources of vulnerability in their country, which may not have been included in the survey options, they noted the following:

- Culture of silence
- High incidence of online sexual activities within the community
- Expectation that children should obey parents and the elderly
- Lack of awareness about OCSEA
- Lack of parenting

- Being passive to protect family 'image or face' (barrier to disclosure)
- Less time for the children especially to the working parents
- *Utang na Loob* (debt of gratitude) and *hiya* (dignity)
- Living in poverty (*"A small amount [of money] for a foreign perpetrator is huge for a Filipino facilitator"* (RA3-PH-20-A))

When participants were asked specifically **why societal factors increase vulnerability to OCSEA differently to sexual exploitation generally**, they often mentioned that the society often does not perceive OCSEA as a criminal act but rather as a way to support the family, that it is tolerated in the communities and that OCSEA is not being given priority in the governments' child protection actions. Some of the responses included:

"In the Philippines, some of the children who are victims of OCSEA for longer periods of time were made to believe by the facilitator (usually their mother or aunts) that they need to be naked in pictures/videos so that they can have money to pay for their needs. Children are unconsciously obligated to do what the facilitators say because it would mean helping out their family. It is also an open secret to some communities that "foreigners" would actually be the answer to the financial difficulty of the Filipino family" (RA3-PH-20-A);

"In the Philippines, the environment has a strong influence on the growth and functioning of a child" (RA3-PH-17-A);

"Based on experience, society plays a big role, once OCSEA activities are known and kept as a secret means of livelihood, vulnerability of children to be engaged in online activities is very high" (RA3-PH-32-A);

"Most of the people don't mind what is happening to children and the focus is on how to earn a living. On the other hand, some are not aware of OCSEA" (RA3-PH-06-A);

"Societal factors have an impact on vulnerability to OCSEA because it somewhat allows the abuse by not discussing it or by even stigmatising the victims which discourages a victim to report" (RA3-PH-16-A);

"Some children expressed that others are doing it, why can't I? (Seeing that others are able to have good food in their community) Stigma and discrimination adds up to further abuse and exploitation of children" (RA3-PH-21-A);

"The physical dependency. The victim is being dependent on others for personal care and activities of daily life" (RA3-PH-09-A).

The comments above illustrate two other cultural concepts in the Philippines - '*Utang na loob*' or 'debt of gratitude' and '*Kapwa*' – the Philippine concept of family.

Utang na loob is a "form of social debt that may play a strong role in holding a child into a situation that he or she would otherwise choose to walk away from. In addition to '*utang na pera*' (financial

debt), *utang na loob* is a particularly strong sense of obligation that is treated with great seriousness in Philippine culture. This debt can be owed, in particular, to someone for providing shelter or commodities in a time of need. Within the context of live-streaming OCSEA, *utang na loob* could be felt toward a parent, caregiver or even broker who had provided for the basic needs of a child and could be a common factor by which a child may remain in an exploitative situation.”¹⁷ ‘*Kapwa*’ is a “particularly powerful concept within Philippine culture. Children in the Philippines are commonly raised to have strong obligations to help their families — regardless of their own personal wellbeing. Within this context, children may, without hesitation, go to great or even dangerous extents to care for the needs of their family. Within the context of live-streaming OCSEA and in situations of poverty, children may readily accept an exploitative situation for the sake of his or her family.”¹⁸

¹⁷ UNICEF Philippines, Terre des Hommes. (Unpublished). Live-streaming Online Child Sexual Exploitation in the Philippines (Regions III and IV).

¹⁸ Ibid.

Reporting

In order to explore what influences the decision to report cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse, participants were asked to indicate whether they believed particular social and cultural factors influenced reporting both on general child sexual exploitation (all kinds) and specifically related to OCSEA in the Philippines.

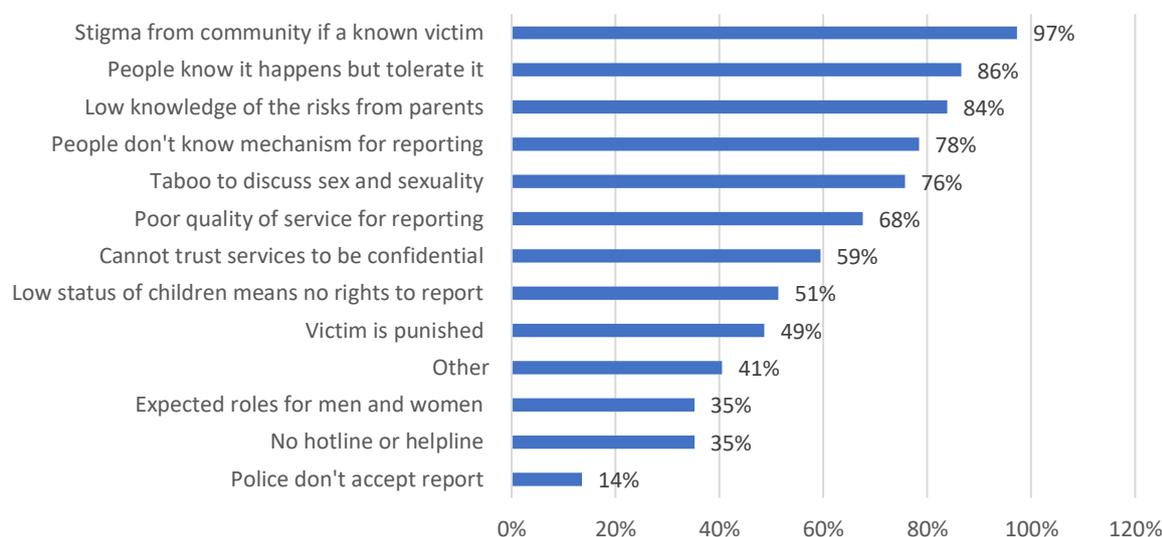


Figure 18. Social and cultural influences on reporting *child sexual exploitation in general*. N=37

As Figure 18 shows, nearly all (97%) frontline workers agreed that stigma from the community influences reporting child sexual exploitation in the Philippines. That was followed by people knowing it happens but tolerating it (86% agreed) and low knowledge of the risk that child sexual exploitation brings from parents (84%). Nearly 80% agreed that people not knowing the mechanisms for reporting (78%) and taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (76%) influences reporting child sexual exploitation. 68% perceived the poor quality of service for reporting as a factor has an impact on reporting and 59% thought that not trusting the services to be confidential might influence the decision to report. No hotline or helpline and expected roles for men and women were found to have smaller influence, however still as much as 35% claimed these factors contribute to the decisions about reporting. Only 14% agreed with the statement that police not accepting reports might influence reporting child sexual exploitation in the Philippines.

Some cultural phenomena are believed to add to the normalisation of OCSEA in the country. These include the expectation that children should help their family, adherence to the culture of silence or not interfering into the affairs of other families (*"Hindi naman tayo napeperwisyo"* - we are not disturbed anyway), stigma of reporting OCSEA cases, especially when they involve a family member and the belief that technology is just for the younger generation.¹⁹

¹⁹ De La Salle University-Social Development Research Center (2019). National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines Final Report [unpublished].

Other factors mentioned by participants that influence reporting child sexual exploitation in general included:

- Children being afraid of men in uniforms
- Family ties (if the offender is part of the family)
- Family/community benefitting from the act
- Thinking that it is a family matter issue
- Fear of being blamed and the perpetrator taking revenge on the victim
- Monetary settlement between the family of the victim and the perpetrator
- Shame or guilt from victims
- Witnesses not wanting to be involved with the issue
- Protecting family 'image or face'
- Victim-blaming and ostracism

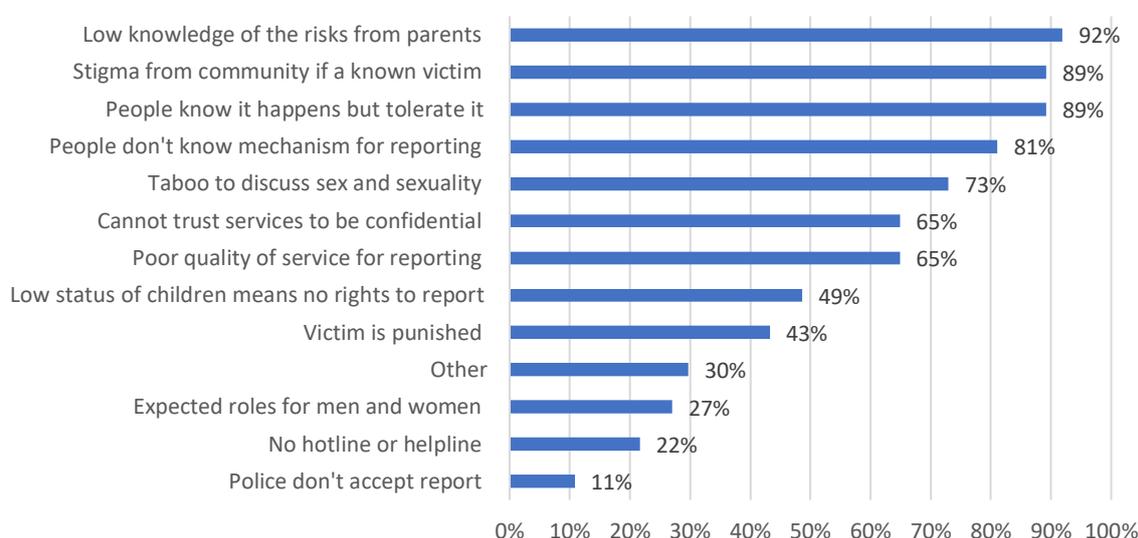


Figure 19. Social and cultural influences on reporting OCSEA. N=37

In cases specifically of OCSEA, the same three factors were selected by the majority of respondents as influencing reporting as with general child sexual exploitation cases: low knowledge of the risks from parents (92%), stigma from the community (89%) and people knowing it happens but tolerating it (89%). That was followed by 81% thinking that people don't know the mechanism for reporting and 73% perceiving taboos around discussing sex and sexuality as factors influencing the decisions about reporting OCSEA. 65% thought that it is the lack of trust in services to be confidential and poor quality of service for reporting that have an influence. Around half of participants selected low status of children in the society meaning they have no rights to report and the fact that the victim is punished as factors influencing reporting OCSEA. As in the case of general child sexual exploitation, no hotline or helpline (22%) and expected roles for men and women (27%) were found to have smaller influence. Police not accepting reports was selected by 11% of respondents. Outside of what was reported above, factors mentioned by participants that influence reporting OCSEA included:

- Capacity of the duty bearers to follow through the reports and to conduct arrests of the perpetrators
- Family ties (if the offender is part of the family)
- Thinking that it is a family matter issue
- Fear of retaliation from the perpetrator
- Feelings of guilt
- Not perceiving OCSEA as a crime: *“OCSEA is a way of living for some hence the activity is kept secret within the family and children are groomed to engage and everything becomes normal for them”* (RA3-PH-32-A)
- Protecting family 'image or face'
- Victim-blaming and ostracism

Factors mentioned by participants as influencing reporting, such as the inability to report a family member, allowing abuse for the good of the family, thinking ‘it’s a family matter’ or saving face for the family show, again, the strong influence of cultural norms – including *Kapwa* and *Utang na loob* – in the Philippines.

Availability of Support

Respondents were asked to evaluate the overall **availability and quality** of medical, psychological, legal and reintegration services for child victims of OCSEA in the Philippines.

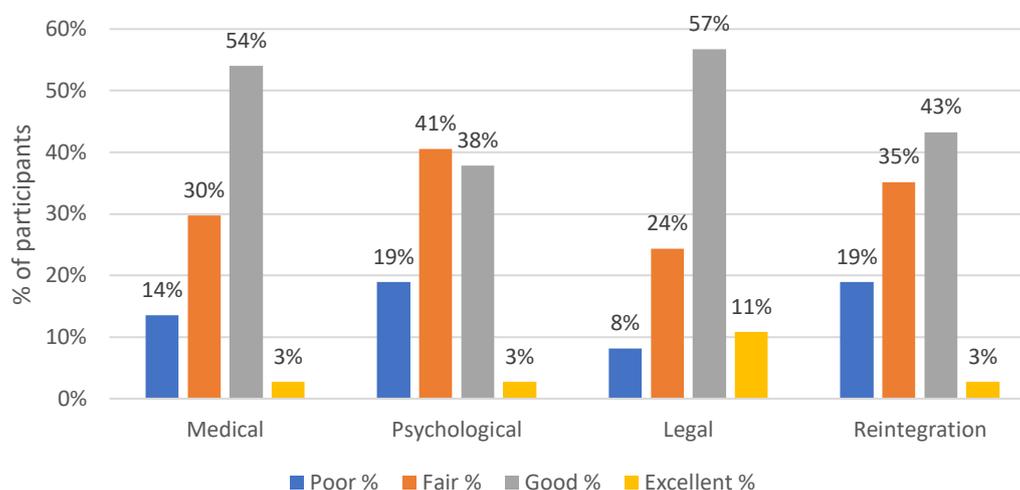


Figure 20. Perception of Availability of Services. N=37

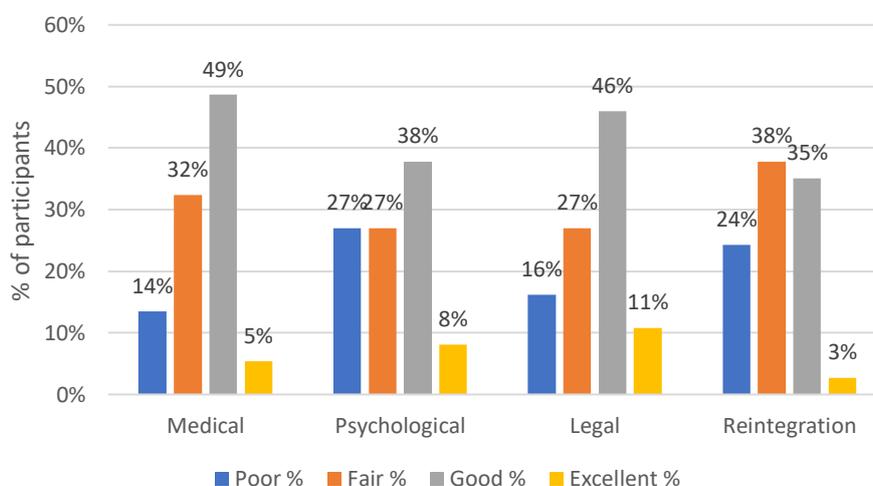


Figure 21. Perception of Quality of Services. N=37

Figure 20 and 21 show that good and fair ratings were selected most often for all services both in terms of availability and quality. Legal services were rated most favourably with 68% rating their availability as good (57%) or excellent (11%) and 57% their quality as good (46%) or excellent (11%). That was followed by medical services, which were perceived by 57% as good (54%) or excellent (3%) in terms of their availability and by 54% as good (49%) or excellent (5%) in terms of their quality. The availability of reintegration services was evaluated by the majority as good (43%) or fair (35%) and the quality by 73% as good (35%) or fair (38%). Psychological services were also rated most often as good (38%) or fair (41%) for their availability and by 38% as good, 27% as fair and 27% as poor for their quality.

These findings need some further exploration, since at the same time the low quality of services was selected by more than 60% of participants as a factor influencing reporting.

When respondents were given the option to explain their appraisals of the quality and availability of services above, among others, they noted:

“Government services for OCSEA are limited and sometimes access to those services is challenging for the victims” (RA3-PH-32-A);

“Reintegration is always a question since in most cases the perpetrators are family members or they are socio-economically incapacitated, thus, expressing their disinterest for reintegration” (RA3-PH-29-A);

“Those support services partners who were trained on Trauma Informed Care, renders good quality of support service for they are victims/child friendly in a trauma informed manner, mostly in region seven but in other far regions, Trauma Informed Care training has to be popularised” (RA3-PH-15-A).

To better understand what affects the availability of support services for children, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they believed particular factors had an influence on the availability of services for children.

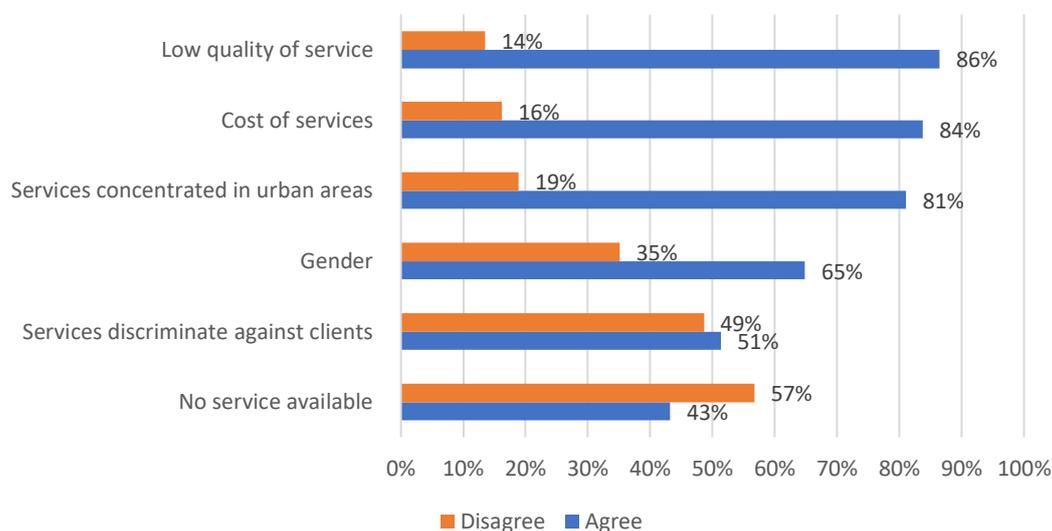


Figure 22. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of child sexual exploitation. N=37

Figure 22 above indicates that factors perceived as having the biggest influence on the availability of support services for children recovering from child sexual exploitation was the low quality of services (86% agreed), closely followed by cost of services (84% agreed) and services being concentrated in urban areas (81% agreed). That stands in contrast with the findings above, which showed that

approximately half of the participants rated the quality of most services as good (Figure 29). 65% of respondents thought that gender affects the availability of support services for child victims of child sexual exploitation in the Philippines. Half indicated that services discriminate against clients (51% agreed) and 43% thought that no services were available.

Participants mentioned additional factors such as:

- Difficulty accessing the services (limited funds, lack of knowledge, etc.)
- No family support and victim-blaming
- Unmanageable workloads for service providers

When participants were asked to indicate to what extent those same factors affect the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA, the results were similar (Figure 23).

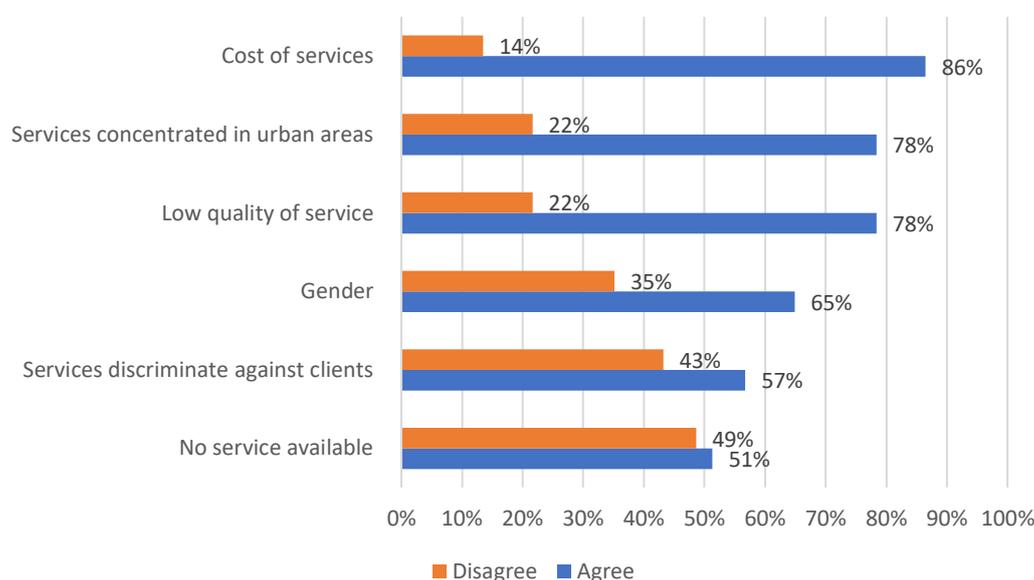


Figure 23. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA. N=37

Cost of services (86% agreed), the location of support services (78% agreed) and low quality of services (78% agreed) were the most frequently selected factors by respondents as affecting the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA. 65% of respondents thought that gender affected the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA in the Philippines. More than half indicated that services discriminate against clients (57% agreed) and 51% thought that no services are available (compared to 43% agreeing in the case of child sexual exploitation).

Respondents additionally mentioned the same factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA as for victims of child sexual exploitation:

- Difficulty accessing the services (limited funds, lack of knowledge, etc.)
- No family support and victim-blaming

- Unmanageable workloads of service providers (*“Service providers are most likely not able to give the services that is due for the children because they are overworked. Lack of enough manpower from the social welfare services units is one of the issues in the field. The workers in the social services basically caters all clients from all walks of life from womb to tomb especially the staff from the government”* (RA3-PH-20-A); *“There is no service tailor-fit to the needs of children who are victims of OCSEA and the available services are for trafficked children. In our experience, the case build-up is problematic and law enforcement told the NGO to gather more evidence instead of the other way around”* (RA3-PH-45-A). These quotes highlight that NGOs in the Philippines are responsible for much of the legal groundwork establishing the case since often they cannot rely on law enforcement for case support. Together with the shortage of staff, this leads to inadequate support services.²⁰
- OCSEA being a new crime: *“Since OCSEA is a new crime, not many service providers are trained to address the needs of the victims. It is very important to highlight that the dynamics of the OCSEA survivors are different from the general sexual exploitation survivors”* (RA3-PH-29-A). The fact that OCSEA is described as a new crime by frontline workers is slightly puzzling. Philippines is recognised as one of the top ten countries producing OCSEA material globally and OCSEA has been part of child protection discussions for over a decade.

²⁰ Personal communication from Philippines local field research team.

Investigations and Convictions

Participants were asked to estimate the amount of OCSEA cases they managed in the last 12 months and determine approximately how many of those resulted in investigations and convictions. It should be noted that those indications were merely estimates, not reliable counts of official cases.

22 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one case of the OCSEA cases they managed directly resulted in a complaint filed to the local police/judicial authorities (617 estimated cases total).

24 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one of the cases they managed resulted in an investigation (198 estimated cases total).

14 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one of the cases they managed resulted in a conviction (37 estimated cases total).

The number of reported cases represent only a fraction of the number of OCSEA incidents that we expect are occurring, the majority of which continue to never come to the attention of social workers or law enforcement.

Despite the passage of the Anti Child Pornography Law and creation of the Office of Cybercrime, conviction rates remain low and the amount of OCSEA is rising – suggesting that robust legal frameworks, while important, are not sufficient themselves to address and prevent the different manifestations of sexual abuse of children.

Law Enforcement and Government Support

In order to understand frontline social support workers perceptions of the support offered by local law enforcement on the issue of OCSEA, respondents were asked: “Based on your work which best describes local law enforcement’s: 1) awareness of OCSEA crimes; and 2) response to OCSEA crimes. Their responses to this question are depicted in Figure 24.

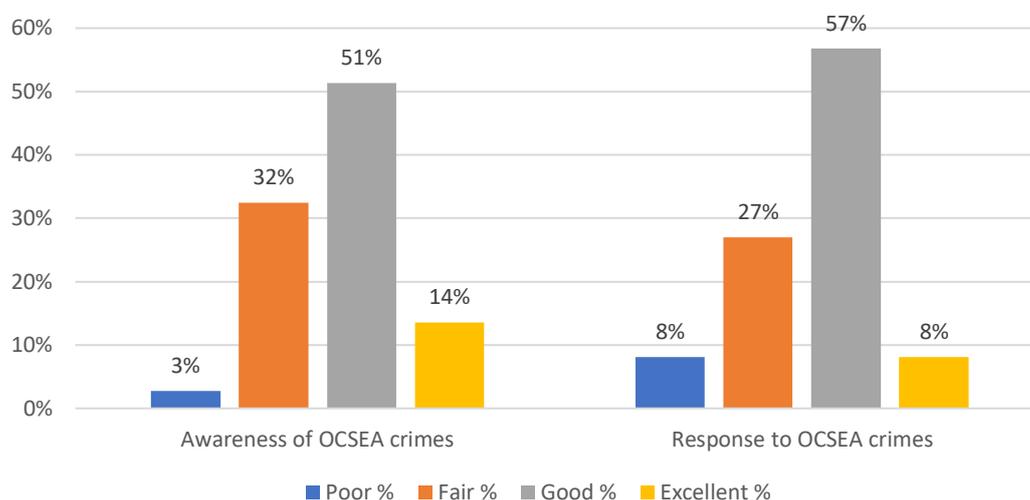


Figure 24. Participants’ perceptions of local law enforcement awareness and response to OCSEA. N=37

Based on the above, we can see that both local law enforcement’s awareness and responses were rated similarly. Awareness was assessed to be slightly better than response, however both questions resulted in at least 30% assessing them as poor or fair in these areas. 51% rated awareness of OCSEA crimes and 57% the response to OCSEA crimes as good and 14% rated the awareness and 8% the response as excellent. As one NGO-worker mentioned, special units responding to OCSEA exist in the Philippines: *“There is this special unit in the police created to address OCSEA crimes, the Women and Children Protection Centre, there is this VFU-Visayas Field Unit and the Mindanao Field Unit who does the investigations and rescue and arrest of suspects/perpetrators of OCSEA crime and the victims”* (RA3-PH-15-A).

Despite this, throughout the qualitative responses across the entire survey, limited awareness was mentioned as a major obstacle to providing adequate services to child victims and engaging in other key activities to address OCSEA. Respondents mentioned that:

“Not everyone in the government or NGO or CSO knows and understands OCSEA” (RA3-PH-17-A);

“There is a need to expand the services of the government and NGOs” (RA3-PH-39-A).

To better understand the ratings above, participants were next asked about their perceptions of the quality of efforts to address OCSEA (Figure 25).

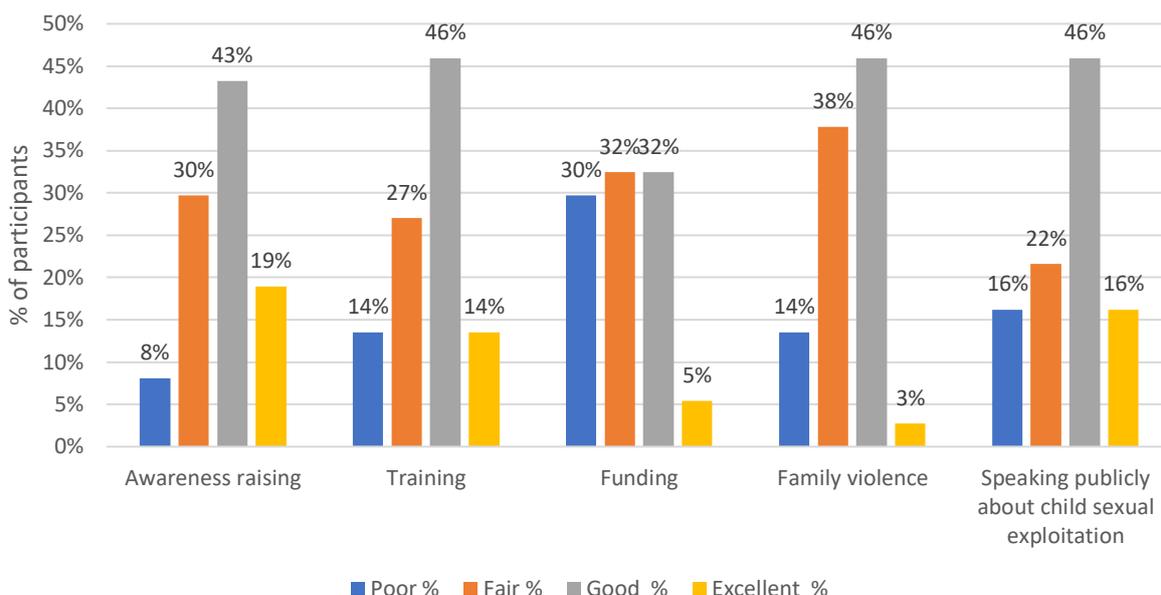


Figure 25. Participants’ perceptions of quality of government efforts to address OCSEA. N=37

As illustrated in the graph above, the government of the Philippines was given quite mixed rankings when respondents were asked to appraise the activities to address OCSEA in the country. Poor and fair ratings were given as often as good and excellent ratings in nearly all areas. Funding was given the lowest ratings with 32% rating it as poor and 30% as fair. Awareness raising received the highest ratings (19% as excellent and 43% as good) however 48% still rated it as poor (8%) or fair (30%). 62% of respondents rated speaking publicly about child sexual exploitation as good (46%) or excellent (16%), while 38% rated it as fair (22%) or poor (12%). Most participants perceived the government's efforts to combat family violence as either fair (38%) or good (46%). Similarly, most respondents rated training as good (46%) or fair (27%) and 14% as either excellent or poor.

Two NGO-workers commented:

“OCSEA cases are new, hence public awareness is poor but the government has started some advocacy initiative with the help of NGOs directly working with victims of OCSEA” (RA3-PH-32-A);

“There are people would who would take advantage of the vulnerability of children. OSCEA is not a priority in the government and there are no strict and proper guidelines for internet safety for children” (RA3-PH-27-A).

Next, frontline social support workers were asked to assess the collaboration on OCSEA between non-government sectors such as NGOs, tourism companies, internet companies etc. The results are illustrated in Figure 26.

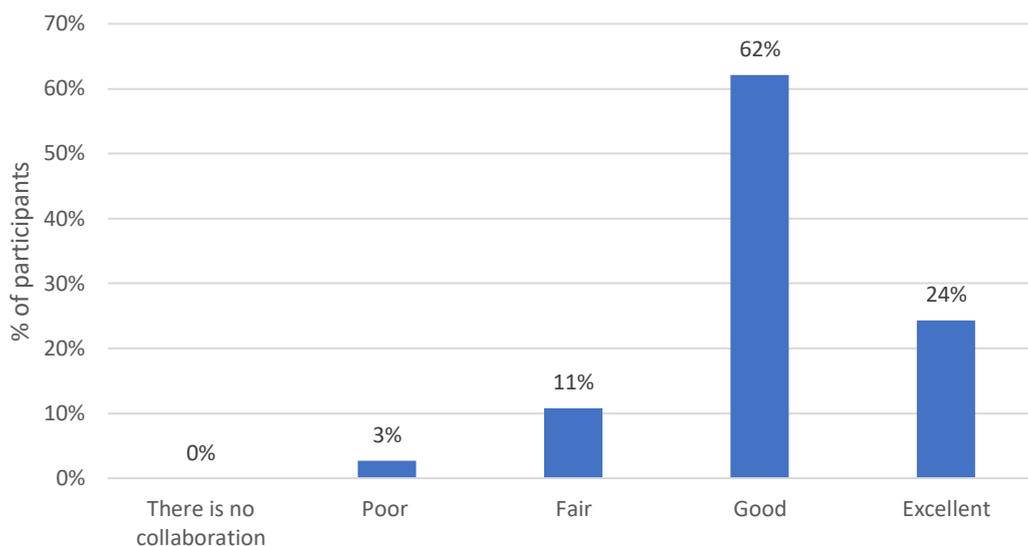


Figure 26. Participants perceptions of collaboration on OCSEA between non-government. N=37

The majority of respondents rated the collaboration on OCSEA between non-government sectors as good (62%) or excellent (24%). Only 11% perceived it as fair and 3% as poor. No one indicated that there is no collaboration on this matter.

Public Awareness

Lastly, the survey attempted to ascertain the levels of public awareness around the issue of OCSEA in the Philippines. In order to do so, frontline social support workers were asked to subjectively appraise young people’s awareness, parent’s awareness and the general public’s awareness of OCSEA – their responses are illustrated in Figure 27.

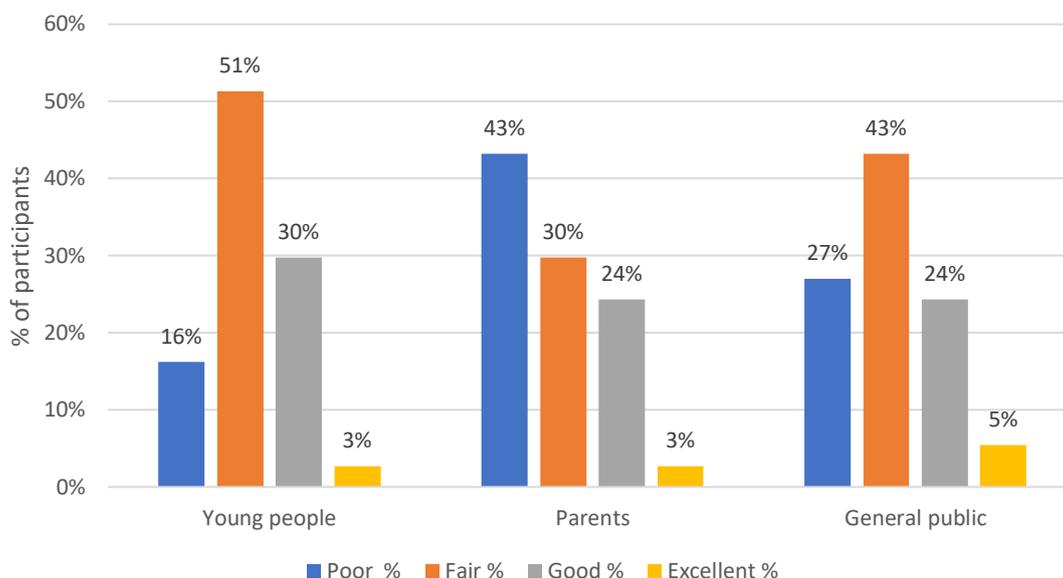


Figure 27. Awareness of OCSEA. N=37

Despite the fact that ‘awareness raising on OCSEA’ and ‘speaking publicly about sexual exploitation’ by the government was largely rated by participants as good or excellent (Figure 25) and several education and awareness raising initiatives on child online safety have been conducted in the Philippines in the past few years, frontline workers still recognised that awareness of OCSEA is overall lacking – especially among parents. As Figure 27 shows, parent’s awareness was perceived as the worst out of the three groups, with 43% rating it as poor, 30% as fair, 24% as good and only 3% as excellent. Half of participants described young people’s awareness of OCSEA as fair (51%), that was followed by ‘good’ (30%), poor (16%) and excellent (3%) ratings. The general public’s awareness was rated by 43% as fair, 27% as poor, 24% as good and 5% as excellent. Taken together with comments about OCSEA being a new crime, these results seem to suggest that current awareness raising efforts are ineffective or perhaps target the wrong group of people.

Respondents were given the option to provide additional comments to qualify their answers above. Some of the responses included:

“As observed, much of the population in the country belong to the poor sector of the society. As they work to make ends meet, sometimes they fail to participate and be concerned on other issues” (RA3-PH-33-A);

“It has always been my advocacy to educate the children/students as well as the parents and the entire community” (RA3-PH-21-A);

“Most of the people doesn't have any idea that OSCEA exists in our country” (RA3-PH-24-A).